

Message Text

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13
ORIGIN ARA-20

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DRAFTED BY:ARA/CEN:DLAZAR:SMM

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 233087

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (OMISSION LINES PARAS 5, 6 AND 7)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, ES, HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAS-EL SALVADOR NEGOTIATIONS

1. AT THE REQUEST OF THE SALVADORAN EMBASSY HERE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOWDLER AND CEN DIRECTOR LAZAR MET WITH DR. ORTIZ MANCIA WHO CAME AGAIN AS A SPECIAL EMISSARY FROM PRESIDENT MOLINA. ORTIZ MANCIA DESCRIBED HIS MISSION AS WANTING TO EXPLAIN THAT EL SALVADOR'S ACTIONS IN RENOUNCING ITS ADHERENCE TO THE PACT OF BOGOTA AND EXPRESSING RESERVATIONS TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE WERE NOT INTENDED TO REJECT THE NOTION OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES BUT WAS INTENDED ONLY TO FORESTALL A MOVE BY THE GOH TOWARDS COMPULSORY ARBITRATION WHICH THE GOES FEARS IS IMMINENT. BUT HE ALSO PLACED SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON A REQUEST THAT THE U.S. DISSUADE HONDURAS FROM ANY MILITARY ACTION AND USE ITS GOOD OFFICES

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TO WORK OUT A SETTLEMENT.

2. ORTIZ SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS IN MEXICO OF THE BOUNDARY QUESTION HAD ALMOST REACHED AGREEMENT. HE SAID THAT

OF THE FIVE POCKETS OF TERRITORY ("BOLSAS") WHICH HAD BEEN IN DISPUTE, ONLY TWO REMAIN TO BE RESOLVED, NAMELY, THE FINCA OF MARTINEZ ARGUETA AND A HIGH POINT CALLED LA VIRTUD AND THAT THE SALVADORANS HAD BEEN WILLING TO CEDE THOSE TWO IN EXCHANGE FOR A SMALL PIECE OF LAND ON THE HONDURAN SIDE WHICH WOULD BE FLOODED BY THE BACKUP OF WATER BEHIND THE NEW DAM ON THE LEMPA RIVER. ORTIZ WAS NOT CLEAR ON WHETHER THIS OFFER ACTUALLY HAD BEEN MADE OR WHETHER THE SALVADORAN DELEGATION HAD BEEN PREPARED TO MAKE IT WHEN BATRES BACKED OUT AT THE LAST MOMENT "AS THOUGH SOMEONE WERE TUGGING AT HIS COAT." AS TO WHO THESE LATTER FORCES MIGHT BE ORTIZ SPECULATED THAT SOME OF THE YOUNGER OFFICERS IN THE HONDURAN ARMY ARE BELIEVED TO BE UNHAPPY WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION AND MIGHT PREFER TO FIGHT RATHER THAN MAKE ANY CONCESSIONS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE ALSO MENTIONED UNIDENTIFIED ELEMENTS OF THE MEDIA.

3. ACCORDING TO ORTIZ THE CONTACTS WHICH HAD BEEN TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THE MILITARY COMMANDERS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER WERE BROKEN OFF FOUR WEEKS AGO BY THE HONDURANS. HE DIDN'T KNOW WHY. ORTIZ ALSO SAID THAT THE SALVADORANS WERE FORTIFYING SOME POSITIONS ON THEIR SIDE OF THE BORDER BUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO GENERAL MOBILIZATION.

4. HE STRESSED THE IMPOSSIBILITY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE GOES OF GOING TO ARBITRATION ON THE BOUNDARY QUESTION. HE DID, HOWEVER, MENTION THE POSSIBILITY OF USING THE FACADE OF ARBITRATION AS A MANNER OF GAINING POLITICAL ACCEPTANCE ON BOTH SIDES FOR A PRE-ARRANGED

SETTLEMENT, THE COMPADRE HABLADO FORMULA. IN DISCUSSING THIS, HOWEVER, HE CONSISTENTLY BACKED AWAY FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF ARRIVING AT AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF SOME OUTSIDE FORCE AND HE VERY CAREFULLY, CASE-BY-CASE, ELIMINATED EVERY OUTSIDE FORCE EXCEPT THE UNITED STATES. AT SEVERAL POINTS HE URGED THE DIRECT INTERVENTION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER.
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5. BOWDLER REITERATED THE U.S. POLICY OF FRIENDSHIP FOR BOTH SIDE AND OUR FEELING THAT ANY SOLUTION, TO BE EFFECTIVE, WILL HAVE TO BE ARRIVED AT BY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND CANNOT BE IMPOSED UPON THEM BY ANY THIRD PARTY. HE NOTED THAT SOMOZA AND ARANA HAD ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS USED THEIR GOOD OFFICES TO TRY TO ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT AND INQUIRED WHY THE TWO SIDES DID NOT AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS READY MECHANISM TO ACHIEVE A SOLUTION. ORTIZ ACKNOWLEDGED THESE EFFORTS (HE REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO RECENT JALAPA MEETING WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAILS) BUT DISMISSED THEM AS INEFFECTIVE BECAUSE SPECIAL INTERESTS IN NICARAGUA AND GUATEMALA DID NOT WANT SETTLEMENT. BOWDLER TOOK ISSUE WITH HIM ON HIS ASSESSMENT,

POINTING TO SERIOUSNESS OF ARANA AND SOMOZA AND BENEFITS WHICH ALL CENTRAL AMERICA COUNTRIES WOULD DERIVE FROM SETTLEMENT. HE STRESSED THE DANGER OF ANY PRECIPITOUS ACTION AT TENSE MOMENTS SUCH AS THE PRESENT AND IN THIS CONTEXT EXPRESSED SURPRISE AND REGRET OVER THE HASTY DECISION REGARDING THE PACT OF BOGOTA AND THE ICJ.

RECALLING HIS EXPERIENCE IN EL SALVADOR DURING THE 1969 WAR HE NOTED HOW ACTIONS AND PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS HAVE A WAY OF BUILDING UP IRRESISTABLE POPULAR PRESSURE FOR MORE EXTREME MEASURES. BOWDLER EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT PAST LESSONS WOULD SERVE TO AVOID A REPETITION OF A SIMILAR SITUATION. HE STATED THAT FURTHER CONVERSATIONS IN NICARAGUA, FOLLOWING SOMOZA'S RETURN ON THE 3RD, OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE TOWARDS A SOLUTION AND HOPED THAT THIS CHANCE WOULD NOT BE LOST. FINALLY, BOWDLER PROMISED TO INFORM HIGHER LEVELS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF MOLINA'S REQUEST FOR U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN SETTLEMENT OF THIS DISPUTE BUT ALSO INDICATED SERIOUS DOUBT THAT THE TYPE OF ACTION ORTIZ SUGGESTED WOULD BE FORTHCOMING.

6. DEPARTMENT REGARDS AS MOST SERIOUS AT THIS MOMENT THE LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LOCAL COMMANDERS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES ALONG THE FRONTIER WHICH IN THE PAST HAS BEEN SO USEFUL IN REDUCING TENSIONS. GIVEN THE DISMAL LACK OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ON BOTH SIDES, THE PROPENSITY IN BOTH COUNTRIES TO ACCEPT ALARMIST RUMORS ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL

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MOBILIZATION AND THE HEATING UP OF THE ATMOSPHERE WHICH IS LIKELY TO RESULT FROM EL SALVADOR'S RENUNCIATION OF THE BOGOTA PACT THERE IS A RISK OF "SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION." OUR EFFORTS AT THIS MOMENT SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS DEFUSING THIS SITUATION SO THAT THE TALKS IN MEXICO, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND ARE CONTINUING DESPITE SATURDAY'S CONTRETEMPS AND THE FORTHCOMING TALKS IN NICARAGUA HAVE A CHANCE TO FURTHER EXPLORE WHATEVER POSSIBILITIES MIGHT EXIST FOR AGREEMENT.

7. FOR ACTION POSTS: EMBASSY SHOULD MAKE DISCREET INQUIRIES REGARDING STATUS OF CONTACTS BETWEEN THE FRONTIER COMMANDERS. IF, IN FACT, SUCH CONTACTS HAVE BEEN DISCONTINUED, EMBASSY SHOULD DISCREETLY URGE, AT APPROPRIATE LEVELS, THAT THESE CONTACTS BE REINITIATED BECAUSE OF THEIR HELPFULNESS IN BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND REDUCING TENSIONS ALONG THE FRONTIER.

8. BOTH ACTION POSTS SHOULD TAKE EVERY APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY TO URGE AVOIDANCE OF THOSE KINDS OF ACTIONS OR REACTIONS WHICH MIGHT ADD TO TENSIONS OR EXACERBATE THE PRESENT SITUATION. KISSINGER

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